EXPANDED BENEFITS

City is attempting to do right thing for employees

GT 2/5/04

Colorado Springs City Council will consider adding a health insurance buy-in plan to its benefit package at the Feb. 10 meeting. Focus on the Family has weighed in against the plan. It is time for those residents in our community who have a different voice to be heard, also.

Currently, spouses and children of city employees have 75 percent of their monthly premiums paid by the city. The buy-in plan offers city employees the ability to purchase additional health insurance for interdependent family members (above and beyond spouses and children) by paying 100 percent of the cost. City staff has worked hard to create a strong benefits package. Ultimately, this helps the city meet its goal of becoming an employer of choice. This plan is fair-minded and creates a competitive benefits plan for the city. It is the right thing to do for all city employees.

Taking a more global view, passage of this plan will help create a more positive image for our city given the negative publicity we have endured since Amendment 2.

Mary Ellen McNally
Colorado Springs

GAY MARRIAGE

Majority view is no reason to restrict people's rights

Two letters in the Jan. 29 Gazette argued that since the majority of Americans oppose gay marriage, it is acceptable to have laws against it ("Morals-based laws hold society together;" "The intolerant preach the need for tolerance"). I disagree.

Depending on who and how you ask, only about six in 10 people say that they oppose gay marriage. I would hardly call this an overwhelming majority. Millions of Americans, including people of faith, believe that marriages between people of the same sex deserve as much recognition from the government as marriages between people of the opposite sex.

More importantly, neither tradition nor majority opinion make something right. In the 1850s, when women such as Susan B. Anthony were arguing for the right to vote, both tradition and majority opinion stood against them. But she was right, and society was wrong. The story of America is a story of advancing freedom, of brave men and women who worked to expand the promise that all are created equal so that it includes every citizen.

Gay and lesbian citizens deserve to have their relationships honored by the state. Gay and lesbian couples are living their lives together, raising children, going to church, paying taxes and contributing to society. I don't care if some churches don't want to recognize these relationships, but those of us who do should have that right. What sense does it make that Britney Spears' Las Vegas 55-hour marriage is sacred enough to guarantee recognition in all 50 states and 1,049 rights and privileges under federal law, but the loving partnership of two women who have lived together for 40 years is not?

Rev. Matthew Johnson-Doyle
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